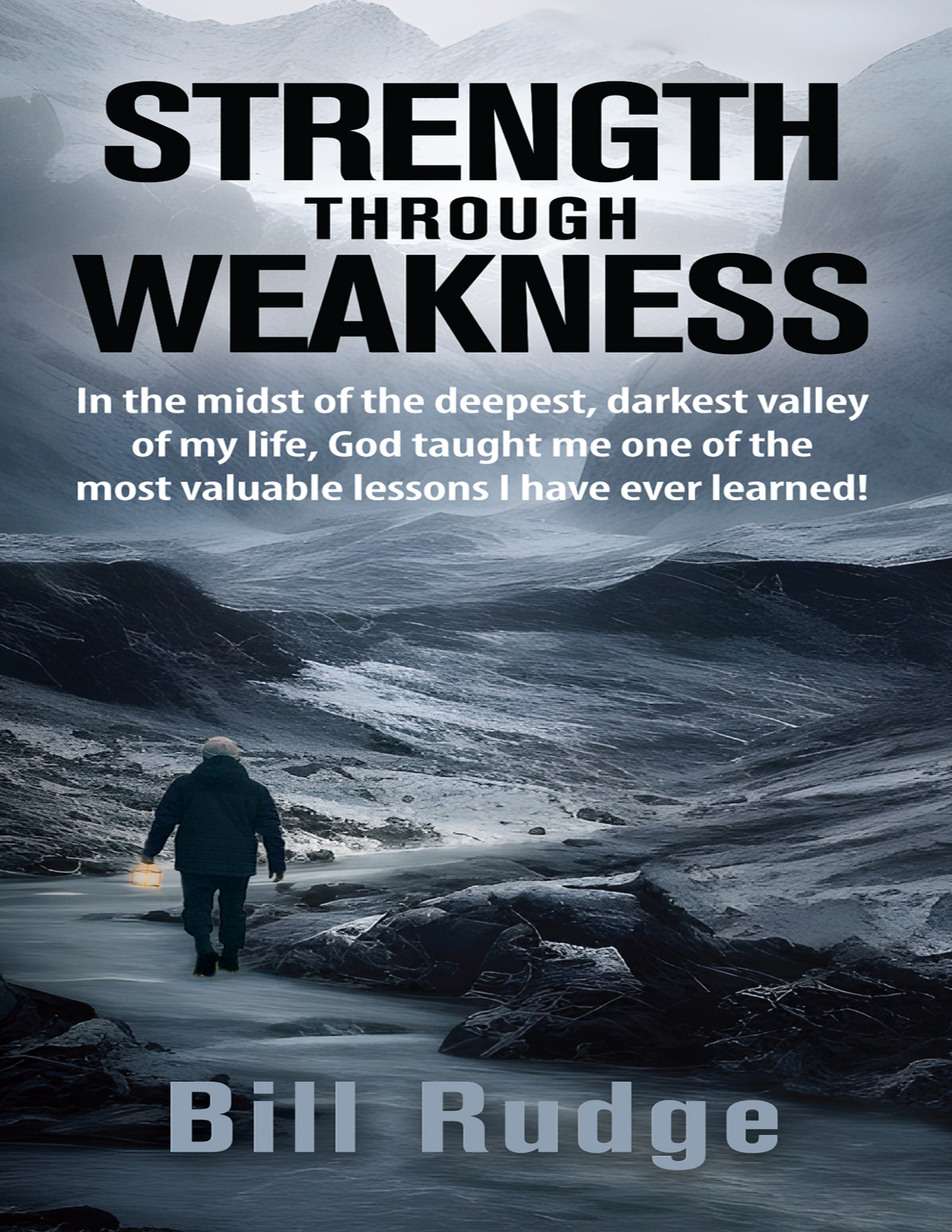
STRENGTH
THROUGH
WEAKNESS
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Strength through Weakness

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Introduction

The apostle Paul penned a phrase that at one time seemed totally contrary to my natural mind. He said, "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). As a weightlifter, the statement made no sense to me. I had been involved in weightlifting for many years, and I knew that the stronger I became, the more weight I could lift.

It made more sense to me, however, as I reflected on my martial arts training. When a person attacks someone, the aggressor thinks he is strong and in control. In reality, during his attack he is weak and vulnerable. When he grabs or punches his victim, he exposes his rib cage and opens himself up to a counterattack. The same is true in our spiritual life—when we think we are strong and in control, we are, in reality, at risk of becoming weak and vulnerable.

The Calm Before The Storm

In January 1987, everything was going well. My ministry had opportunities to grow worldwide. I had just written a pamphlet titled, *Cartoons and the Occult—A Deadly Combination* (one of the first to warn about occultism in cartoons), which was sent out in our February newsletter before I left for a tour of the Holy Land.

I had no idea that I was about to experience intense spiritual warfare and enter one of the deepest, darkest valleys I had ever gone through. It would cost me almost everything—my life, my family and my ministry.

Many years earlier, when I first started the Bill Rudge Ministries, God's Word and Spirit had clearly warned me never to allow pride or sin to get a foothold in my life. My knowledge concerning the occult and spiritual warfare had been instrumental in exposing many strongholds of Satan's kingdom. Therefore, being on the front lines of spiritual warfare, it was crucial that I never let my guard down, not even temporarily. To give the enemy even a slight opportunity would be to open the door to his ravaging and murderous spirit. I knew if I stepped outside of God's protection, Satan would immediately try to destroy me.

For four months (February through June 1987), my family and I were met with one crisis and tragedy after another. It all began with a traumatic experience in the Middle East and ended with one of the most valuable lessons God has ever taught me.

Israeli-Stamped Passports Forbidden

In February 1987, my wife, Karen, and I hosted a tour group (including our 13-year-old daughter Tabitha and 10-year-old son BJ) to the Holy Land. We were to land first in Amman, Jordan, so that we could visit Petra. While flying Royal Jordanian, I was looking through their magazine and noticed that there was no country of

Israel indicated on the map. I later discovered it was because they did not recognize Israel as a nation.

I knew from news reports that there was continuing hostility between the Arabs and Jews. Now, I would see firsthand the hatred between those who traced their common ancestry back to Abraham.

We landed safely in Amman. After going through security, our group boarded a bus to go to our hotel. Suddenly, two men came out of the airport and got on the bus. One of them said in broken English, that they wanted to see Karen Rudge, Tabitha Rudge and BJ Rudge. We did not know why they were being singled out. One of the men said, "You have Israeli stamps in your passports, and you cannot enter Jordan!" He explained that, since Jordan and Israel were at war, it was forbidden to have an Israeli stamp in our passports.

It Happened Before

I did not realize that we had Israeli stamps in our passports from a previous Holy Land tour in 1984. Back then, we had trouble as we were boarding the plane to return home. My name was called over the loudspeaker because my luggage tag had come off. I gave Karen my passport, so I would not lose it and told her to board the plane. After identifying my suitcase, the Israelis refused to let me leave without checking my passport again and would not send anyone to the plane (which was leaving in a few minutes) to get it. My family was in tears on the plane, thinking I was being left behind in Israel. Finally, however, I was permitted to board the plane just before takeoff.

It Happened Again

Now, a few years later, the Jordanian authorities would not let us enter their country. We had been warned before leaving on this trip to be sure we did not have Israeli stamps in our passports when we entered the Arab country of Jordan. Karen had checked them and

assured me we did not have Israeli stamps in them. The Israelis were not supposed to have stamped our passports in 1984, but were to have just stamped a separate piece of paper. However, even though they told us they had not, they had actually stamped our passports,.

The Jordanians somehow overlooked the Israeli stamp in my passport, so I told them that mine was the same as my family's. It was good that I did, for undoubtedly, they would have found mine later.

Needless to say, we were in a precarious situation. Flying back to the United States and leaving our tour group on their own would create many complications. So, what were we to do?

The American Embassy Ordeal

We had flown all night from New York, and now it was evening in Jordan. It was getting late, and we were all very tired. The Jordanian authorities finally agreed to let us go to the hotel with the group after the Jordanian tour company supposedly posted a $1,600 bond. The next day, we had to go to the American Embassy to get new passports while our tour group headed for Mount Nebo (the site where Moses was allowed to view the Promised Land though forbidden to enter it).

Have you ever seen a hijacking movie where the rescuers speed the victims through city streets trying to escape? Well, that is how we felt. My family and I were packed into a compact car. The driver sped through the main streets of Amman, then down side streets en route to what we thought was the American Embassy. We became concerned when we were taken instead to an old building and led into a back room. We were told to sit on a chair in the middle of the room one at a time as our pictures were taken. We were relieved to discover the photos were for our new passports. We hurried back to the car and headed for the American Embassy.

It felt as though we were trying to escape from terrorists who were chasing us. That is the level of trauma we were experiencing.

Finally, after spending a half day at the American Embassy waiting on uncomfortable wooden chairs and after paying $300 for all four of us, we were issued new passports.

The driver then drove us at high speed for several more hours, so we could catch up with our tour group for the night. We missed Mount Nebo, just as Moses missed going to the Promised Land, because of a careless mistake that cost us greatly.

We rejoined our tour group. We thought our dilemma was over, but it was just beginning!

Intimidation At Every Checkpoint

At every one of the many checkpoints in Jordan, as we headed for the Israeli border, the Jordanian soldiers would board the bus with rifles draped over their shoulders, and either single out me or one of my family members. We had new passports with only Jordanian stamps in them, but the officials at the airport must have radioed ahead, because it was obvious that the guards were informed about us. They would request to see one or more of our passports, then slowly and thoroughly examine them in an attempt to intimidate and traumatize us. When they were done harassing us, they would get off the bus—glaring at us as they did—then would allow the bus through the checkpoint.

Finally, we reached the border and were able to cross the bridge from Jordan into Israel. We entered Israel and were waiting inside the bus for our luggage to be thoroughly examined. Our bus was next in line to be checked when, suddenly, a caravan of army jeeps and cars came speeding down to the border. We thought we were in the middle of a war at the border. Eventually, we were informed that the Israeli Prime Minister had come to the border to check the efficiency of crossing the bridge. That was why all the press and army vehicles and soldiers had come along.

One Step Ahead of Danger

There were several dangers in Israel. The cable car to the top of Masada was shut down the day after we rode it. There was rioting and shooting near Nablus (site of Jacob's well) the day after we were there. Also, while we were in Israel, the terrorists had set a deadline to kill the American hostages in Beirut, Lebanon. If that deadline had not been postponed while we were there, it could have been even more dangerous in the Middle East.

Our Son BJ Injures His Ankle In Jerusalem

On our last day of the tour, we were walking through the streets of the old city of Jerusalem and the outskirts where the city of David was located. Our ten-year-old son, BJ, was excitedly jumping down the steps. The next thing I knew someone told me he was hurt. He was sitting quietly so no one would notice, but there were big tears in his eyes.

His ankle was badly swollen and hurt so severely that we thought he had broken it. We were to leave Israel the next morning to return to Amman, Jordan, from where we would fly back to the States. I did not want to take my son to the hospital because they might have to admit him. If we were delayed in Israel, we would miss our flight out of Amman. To be separated from our tour group and try to make our way through Jordan on our own to the airport in Amman could be even more dangerous—we might never get out of there.

All I knew was that I wanted to get my family home, so I carried BJ through the streets of Jerusalem until my arms were exhausted. The next day, I had to carry two heavy suitcases, as well as BJ, on and off the bus and through all the checkpoints in our departure from Israel. My arms burned with pain as I hurriedly carried the luggage to its destination and then immediately went back for BJ.

Delayed In Israel

Just as we were ready to leave Israel for Jordan, the Israelis delayed us because our bus driver had left his driver's license at home. They would not issue a permit for our bus to leave until either the driver's license arrived or we received another authorized driver.

We had just enough time to arrive an hour early at the Amman airport to check in for our flight, but now, the Israelis were delaying us. Our tour guide was trying to persuade the Israeli officials to let us go. He was explaining that the Americans must be released, or they were going to miss their plane. All was to no avail.

I knew we would face more hassle and delay in Jordan as well, but there was no hurrying the Israeli officials. The proper ID finally arrived, and we were allowed to leave. By now, we were one hour behind schedule and would barely arrive before our flight was to leave. As we were finally leaving Israel and they were checking each of us through, the computer broke down when it was my turn. Thank the Lord; they got it operating within a few minutes.

The Harassment Of Our Daughter Tabitha

Once we were back in Jordan, we were again delayed at each checkpoint as armed soldiers got on the bus and harassed one or more of my family members. Our group consisted of only 50 people, so we did not know how long the international flight with hundreds of people on it would be delayed for us.

Our Arab bus driver and Arab tour guide were urging the guards, "Please hurry! They're going to miss their plane!"

At the last checkpoint before we reached the airport, four or five guards with guns got on the bus. There were several more guards standing around outside the bus at this strong military checkpoint.

The people at the American Embassy had told me not to throw our old passports with the Israeli stamps away because we could use them for other countries, so I had four Israeli-stamped passports concealed in the front pocket of my pants. I did not put them in my

luggage, because if they searched it and found them, we would be taken off the bus and kept from going to the airport. I gave each member of my family their new passports with the Jordanian stamp, because this time everyone on the bus had to be holding their own passport for inspection. They would not let me hold my children's.

The guards went through mine, Karen's and BJ's passports and said they were okay. Then, they came to our daughter, Tabitha, and said, "Your passport has an Israeli stamp!"

You can imagine the fear and terror! For a moment, I thought I had given her the Israeli-stamped passport by mistake. But I knew I had looked at those passports thoroughly, so I protested to the guard, "No, that's a Jordanian stamp, not an Israeli stamp!" He replied, "No, it's an Israeli stamp, and she stays here with us!" He said to her, "Get your suitcase. You're getting off the bus and staying here with us!" As Tabitha stepped into the aisle with guards at her side, my wife and I stood up in protest. I thought I was going to be shot, but I insisted, "If she gets off, I'm coming with her!"—for I was certain they would rape her. At that, one of the guards pushed me back down into my seat and responded, "She can stay." He knew all along it was a Jordanian stamp.

When the guards left the bus, my daughter, wife and many of the other girls and women began to cry. To this day, I feel the emotional trauma of that experience every time I think of it. I can now identify somewhat with the horror people must feel when being hijacked by terrorists.

Imagine the trauma of being held hostage in a country where the culture is very different from yours; where they speak a foreign language; where you know their mentality is that they do not care if you live or die; where you do not have the security of the United States; where no weapon or means of defense is available for your protection, and you do not expect to ever get out of that country alive. The vulnerability and terror we experienced made us feel as though we were really in a hostage situation.

Where Is Gate 11? Where Is My Son?

We finally arrived at the airport, hoping the plane had been delayed for our group. I was carrying my son while dragging luggage through the airport checkpoints. I would periodically put the luggage down, then place BJ on it to give my arms a rest.

Someone at the airport said to me, "You cannot possibly carry your son and luggage through all these checkpoints and then up the escalator to the plane. We will put your son in a wheelchair and take him up in an elevator while you go through the remaining checkpoints. He will meet you at the plane's gate." I responded, "No, I'll carry my son." However, they insisted, because of the distance we had to walk, the escalator we had to go on and the fact that I had to carry the luggage through for inspection. I replied, "Well then, I'll go with him." They said, "No, you have to go through all the checkpoints." So, they wheeled my son away, supposedly on his way to our plane.

It seemed like an eternity as we went through several checkpoints. Our Arab tour host remained with us, earnestly asking those in security to please hurry the Americans through as their plane was being delayed and would be leaving shortly.

When we got to the next-to-the-last checkpoint, which was a metal detector, I looked around, and our Arab tour guide was gone. He completely disappeared. I guess that was as far as he could go with us.

I urgently asked the others in our group, "Where is he?" All he told us before disappearing was to go to gate 11. Where was gate 11? None of us knew how to get there. So, I looked for someone at the airport who could speak English to ask where it was, but I could not find anyone. I asked several security people the location of gate 11, but received no response.

Where was my son? Was he already on the plane, going to America without me? What was a ten-year-old (who could not even walk because of an ankle injury) going to do in New York City by himself? What was going to happen to him? Had they put him on another plane by mistake and sent him to some other country where

I might never find him? Those thoughts flooded my mind as fear gripped my heart.

With terror in my eyes, I began to run through the airport trying to find gate 11. The whole group of 50 people followed me like a stampeding herd. Finally, I located gate 11. The passengers were in a long line boarding the plane. I anxiously asked, "Is there a little boy in front of the line in a wheelchair?" Someone replied that there was no little boy in a wheelchair.

I almost lost my composure as I desperately ran around the people at the back of the line, pushing my way up to the front. When I got to the entrance to the plane, there, sitting in a wheelchair, was my son. What relief I felt as I thanked the Lord that BJ was safe.

One Last Checkpoint

We had to go through one more thorough check just before boarding the plane. For the females, the lady security guard practically strip-searched them—not by undressing them, but by physically examining them everywhere to see if they had anything concealed.

I was ready to enter the plane when the last Jordanian guard asked me, "What is that in your pocket?" I still had the passports with Israeli stamps in my front pocket so they would not find them in our suitcases. Each person had to hold their own passport to get on the plane. I knew if he saw the passports with Israeli stamps my family would not be allowed to board the plane, and then who knew what would happen.

I did not want to lie, so I stated, "It's just paper." He insisted, "Let me see." I reached into my pocket and began to slowly pull them out. Just as the tops of the blue passports were about a quarter of an inch out, he unexpectedly said, "You can go!" So, he let me get on the plane.

Once in their seats, some of the girls and women in our group began to cry. We did not feel safe until the plane was in the air—and

even then, we felt they might somehow turn it around and take us back to Amman. BJ did not have crutches, so he had to hop up and down the aisle to go to the restroom. It scared the passengers—waking many of them from their sleep—because it sounded like the plane had mechanical problems. None of us really felt secure until we finally touched down in New York.

After returning to the States, my daughter said she never realized at the time how important the simple prayer would be that I prayed before the trip: "Lord, keep us safe!"

Most Arabs And Jews We Met Were Friendly

Most of the Arabs and Jews in Jordan and Israel were friendly and treated us well. We were just victimized by the hostility and conflict in the Middle East.

On our flight back to New York, I talked to an Arab man from Canada almost the entire time. We got along so well that he invited me and my family to visit his home any time. While on a previous trip to Israel, Karen and I talked at length to a Jewish family, who invited us to stay at their house in Jerusalem. I have several Jewish and Arab friends. Before going on this eventful trip and after returning, I spent much time helping an Arab pastor in the U.S., who was facing a family crisis.

Burnout And Financial Difficulties

After returning home in February 1987, I realized what a toll the Middle East ordeal had taken. I was emotionally drained and experiencing burnout.

I returned to all the pressures of a rapidly growing ministry. February had always been one of our lowest months financially. We were in the midst of building an addition on our ministry center, which God had led me to do by faith. The bills for the materials were coming in, and we could barely meet general ministry expenses, let alone those for a large building addition.

I Felt Like Walking Away From Everything

With the traumatic experience my family and I had gone through in the Middle East, and now facing financial burdens, as well as marriage problems and other difficulties, I felt like walking away from everything.

I went off all radio stations except for one local station. I also canceled all my speaking engagements and would not accept any more.

Satan had me down; I was defeated. God was allowing me to be stripped of everything in my life that gave me confidence and security. A good friend in the ministry later said to me, "I have never seen Satan so manifest. He had you down by the throat for the final count and was ready to finish you off." He was right. Physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, Satan was out to destroy me, and I was powerless to stop him. When everything was apparently hopeless, the Lord opened a door.

My friend wanted to suggest a place for me and my wife to get away and "just happened" to remember reading about a retreat where hurting ministers go. He could not obtain the phone number, and was just about to give up when the Lord impressed on his heart someone he could call who was able to get him the number. So in March 1987, my wife and I went to Marble Retreat in Colorado for two weeks.

Almost Killed In Colorado

After all the previous trauma, I was not in a good state of mind. I really did not care about life at that time and was probably experiencing PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder). To relieve stress, and for the thrill of it, I drove the winding mountain roads in a small rental car, speeding up to 90 miles per hour. I nearly went off the road and over a cliff three different times as I sped around the curves. I would have assuredly been killed, because there was a great drop-off. At the time, I did not really care.

Then, one night, I felt compelled by the Lord to go into the mountains near the retreat center. I left the group and my wife there and went alone into the mountains for a few hours. I was not concerned about bears, mountain lions, coyotes and wolves, because I knew that God wanted me in those mountains.

I prayed and sought the Lord for several hours. He began to deal with me and show me where I had allowed Satan to get a foothold in my life and what I needed to do about it.

The Lord also convicted me about violating the speed limit. The very next day I was back on those mountain roads, but instead of driving 90 miles per hour, I went the posted 35 miles per hour. A boulder, larger than the car I was driving, was in my lane as I came around the sharpest curve. It must have just recently tumbled down the mountain. If I had not obeyed the Lord by driving the speed limit, I would have hit that boulder at a high rate of speed, been killed instantly and thrown down the steep mountainside.

In His mercy, God had intervened and dealt with me the night before. For several days, I had driven those mountain roads at high speeds and there had been no boulders that size which had fallen on my lane.

Jesus was right when He said that the devil is a murderer and a liar (John 8:44). He is an enemy (Matthew 13:39) and an adversary who "prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8). When we foolishly rebel and disobey God by opening up some aspect of our lives to Satan and letting our guards down, we become vulnerable to his destructive desires.

Christ Restores Us

Although there seemed to be no hope for our marriage, and I thought I was losing my wife, children and ministry, the Lord kept impressing on my heart that if I totally depended on Him, He would do a miracle.

At the Marble Retreat on Sunday, March 8, about 6:00 p.m., the Lord spoke to my heart that I was like Samson and had lost my

strength. It was snowing, which caused us not to *escape* by going out for the evening, but to stay at the retreat and make a choice.

After talking, we both made a renewed commitment to the Lord and to each other. Instead of living by feelings and emotions in our relationship, we decided to live by commitment to each other and obedience to the Lord, which is the biblical and only way. I knew my marriage had to be a priority, or I would not even have a ministry.

Karen Develops A Tumor

About a month after we arrived home from Colorado, we found out (around the end of April 1987) that Karen had a large ovarian tumor which eventually grew to the size of a grapefruit. This was conclusively confirmed from the ultrasound results we received just before our ministry's annual banquet in May.

I thought, "The Middle East trauma, Colorado and now this. When is it going to end?"

I was 34 and Karen was 33. We had recently become actively involved in nutrition and health. Therefore, I believed we could beat it naturally. I began talking to several doctors who specialized in nutrition. Through proper diet, positive attitude, exercise, more relaxation and time away together, plus trying to protect her from as much stress as possible, it appeared the tumor was shrinking in size. Her health and countenance were improving greatly.

Dad Suffers A Heart Attack

Next, my father, who was a great help to me at the ministry, suffered a massive heart attack on May 8, 1987. He stayed up all night at his house sitting in a chair in that condition, so my mother would not be alone at night.

Somehow, he managed to drive himself to the hospital in the early morning. He neatly parked his car and locked all the doors. Then, he walked in and waited at the check-in desk until the woman at the admissions desk saw him and realized he was totally

disoriented. The doctor could not believe he had driven himself to the hospital and even parked his car.

He endured almost four days after the doctor gave him no chance of survival, giving us an opportunity to express our love. Then, on May 11, he died.

Karen Collapses

The trauma of my father's death and the all-night vigils caused Karen great emotional stress. She had never lost a close family member before and had difficulty handling it. The very evening he died, she collapsed in our bedroom. I thought I would be burying her the same day as my father.

There was a power of darkness that was enveloping my life and our ministry that I felt powerless to resist.

With my father's death, Karen was under so much stress and her immune system was so weakened, that we knew there was no way through nutrition, exercise or positive mental attitude that Karen's body would be strong enough to beat this tumor. Even if Karen strictly adhered to her nutrition program, the stress would inhibit digestion, assimilation and elimination. Her resistance was too low to overcome the additional stress of the tumor that appeared to be growing again.

We had prayed, fasted and sought the Lord for healing, but He chose not to heal. Years before, when Karen had a liver disease and we thought she was going to die, the Lord intervened, healed and restored her health. In this situation, He did not.

I Felt Like God Had Forsaken Me

All these stressful events were going on, along with many other difficulties. For four months, I had no real peace. During this time, I had not sensed God's presence or the closeness to Him that I had before. I felt like David in the Psalms. When I prayed, I felt that my

prayers were hitting a sky of bronze. I felt He had forsaken me and was not even hearing my prayers.

The only reason I kept reading my Bible and praying was because the Word of God told me to, and I wanted to obey it. However, I did not feel His presence. I felt completely powerless.

The only time I had any peace at all during that four-month period was during my father's funeral. God, in His mercy, gave me His peace for those days of the calling hours and the funeral.

I was able to stand by my dad's casket during the funeral and say, "Twenty-four years ago, in 1963, when I was 10 years of age, I stood with no real hope in this same funeral home by the casket of my seven-year-old brother, who was tragically hit by a car and killed. But today, knowing Christ as my Savior and Lord, I stand by my father's casket with hope in Christ that he will one day be resurrected from the dead!"

Except for those three days of the funeral, I did not have God's peace. I lived like that for four months—a time of God allowing me to go through the deepest, darkest valley I had ever gone through. I was certain He had forsaken me, but I had nothing else to hold on to.

Restoration Of God's Presence

God, however, had not forsaken me. He had been faithful through it all. He had taken the evil that Satan had tried to use against me and, in His mercy, was working it out in His time and His way to bring about the greatest restoration I would ever know.

I discovered later that God had impressed on the hearts of several people to pray, fast and intercede for us and the ministry during this time. They did not know what was actually happening, but they sensed in their spirits that we were in the midst of a tremendous spiritual battle.

The day and night of May 19, 1987, Karen's pain from the tumor was the worst she had experienced, and her stomach was much enlarged. All that night, I had such terrible indigestion and chest

pain that I thought I might have a heart attack. I could not take any more. I cried out, "God, it's been four months! I cannot endure much longer."

On the morning of May 20, God began to restore His presence in my life. When I woke up, I began to pray and seek the Lord. He spoke to my heart that He was turning back the tide of evil unleashed against us and was raising up the wall of protection again.

For four months, I had no real direction from the Lord and could not make important decisions, because my mind was muddled. Now, all of a sudden, the Lord seemed to be speaking to my heart again about everything I should do. The decisions I needed to make became clear. I felt like Nebuchadnezzar, who had been humbled for pride and stripped of everything, but after God's appointed time was fulfilled, and Nebuchadnezzar learned that all he possessed and accomplished came from the Lord, everything was restored to him (Daniel 4:28-37).

I began to experience His restoration. I felt His peace, as well as a closeness I had not known during the past four months. His power and His presence returned. It was the greatest feeling in the world! He confirmed the restoration by His Word as my Bible study that very morning "just happened" to be the 31st chapter of Jeremiah. It was about the restoration of Israel and the new covenant. I knew God was speaking to me by His Word and Spirit that the time of my restoration had come. Again, God had proven Himself to be faithful in my life and ministry.

We know that serving the Lord will still result in Satan's attacks and times of intense spiritual warfare and trials. We also know that the Lord will protect, intervene and not leave us as prey if we honor and obey Him.

Karen's Painless Surgery And Our Completed Ministry Center

In June 1987, Karen had surgery to remove the tumor; everything went well. God, in His wisdom, chose to allow it to happen that way. As I look back, I have to admit that if God would have healed her, then He would have only dealt with the symptoms. Instead, God wants to deal with the root causes.

I prayed, "Lord, You have not answered my prayer to heal Karen, and rightly so in Your wisdom. I accept that because You want to deal with the root causes in Karen's and my lives. But in Your mercy, Lord, will You please not let Karen have any pain after the surgery?"

People had been telling Karen how much pain she would experience after her surgery, and she was frightened. Following surgery, she was to have no visitors. Yet, the evening after her surgery when she awoke, a minister's wife was at the foot of her bed. She said that the Lord had sent her to tell Karen that she would have no pain. Then, she left. Her words came as confirmation to my prayer that Karen would have no pain, and this gave her great peace. As Karen will testify, the prayer was amazingly fulfilled. Following her surgery, she had absolutely no pain.

The Lord also *miraculously* provided all the needed funds, so the ministry addition was completely paid for and not a penny of interest was incurred.

All My Determination Was Not Enough

For the ten-year (1977-1987) history of our ministry, I had been totally committed to Christ and attempted to live under His Lordship. For ten years, I had built my life and ministry on the principles of God's Word. For ten years, we witnessed the Lord's great blessing. For ten years, I seemed invincible.

However, I came up against something that was overwhelming and beyond my ability to withstand. All my martial arts training, strength from lifting weights, determination, discipline, self-control,

nutrition, exercise and positive mental attitude could not give me the victory to overcome it. Without the Lord's supernatural intervention, I knew I was defeated, and it was over.

Looking back, I see the diabolical scenario Satan had hoped to set up. I would be killed in Colorado. Then, my father would die from a heart attack. Had I died, along with my father's death and her tumor, Karen probably would not have survived either. My children would have been left without a father, without a mother and without a grandfather. That is the evil Satan had sought to unleash.

God Intervened

There is a God in heaven who is faithful and merciful. This God of the Bible intervened in our lives and ministry and brought a great restoration and victory.

In the midst of the deepest, darkest valley of my life, God taught me one of the most valuable lessons I have ever learned: when I am weak, then I am strong. God then began to greatly restore and bless my life, family and ministry. He made our family even closer and stronger. He instilled within me even more of a desire and zeal for Him and His Word. He empowered and used my life and ministry more than ever. He made our ministry far more effective than when we were ready to expand worldwide in February 1987. He greatly anointed the ministry and opened doors that would enable us to have an impact on countless lives throughout the world for His glory.

The apostle Paul accurately stated:

> And He [the Lord] has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

I Stand In God's Strength, Not My Own

If you would ask me what the major turning points in my life and ministry were, I would point back to May 1971 when I surrendered my life to Jesus Christ, and then, to this time in 1987. Although I would never want to go through it again, those four months of 1987 have proven to be some of the most significant experiences of my life.

The Lord had allowed everything I built my life on, that gave me strength and security, to be stripped away, so I would be totally dependent on Him. Once God does that in our lives, He strengthens and empowers us.

Zechariah 4:6 says:

> Then he [the angel] said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts."

When the Israelites trusted in their chariots and the armies of Egypt, they were defeated. When they trusted in the Lord, even though they were outnumbered and apparently defeated, they were victorious.

Placing confidence in my own strength and abilities is a certain path to failure. However, when I become weak—in the sense that I humble myself and become totally dependent upon the Lord—He intervenes and manifests His strength and power. When I am on my knees before the Lord, I am weak. I am humble, and I am yielded to Him. Then, when I stand to speak or minister, I stand in His courage, His power, His anointing and His authority.

My strength does not come from Bill Rudge ... but from the Lord!

Would I Go Back?

Would I go back to Israel and Jordan? Most definitely—with proper passports, that is. Since the ordeal in 1987, I have returned to the Middle East numerous times, and have traveled to many potentially dangerous countries throughout the world. Most of the

people, whether Christian, Jewish or Muslim, were friendly and helpful; they were appreciative for my coming during tense times filled with violence and threats against Americans.

I have led many Holy Land Adventures, as well as ministering in Muslim countries in Asia, Europe and Africa. Several times, I have spoken to Messianic congregations in Jerusalem, at two youth rallies in Cairo and to a variety of Jewish and Arabic groups in the U.S.

In February 1998, I returned to Jordan—refusing to be victimized by what happened in 1987—but still having some remaining residue of anger and nightmares from the trauma of the Jordan experience. A Muslim from Jordan, who was one of my son's high school soccer coaches, became friends of our family. He met me in Amman and took me on an evening tour throughout the capital city of Jordan during which I was treated very well by everyone we met—a stark contrast to the frightening episode in 1987.

In July 2002, my wife traveled with me as I ministered in the Netherlands and England. In London, I spoke at an Iranian center. The pastor had been an officer in the Iranian military. Many others in the audience were either officers or enlisted men during the Iranian Revolution in 1979 when the Americans were taken hostage on November 4, 1979.

I was scheduled to speak at both the Persian and English services. Before I spoke, I was told not to mention Israel or that I was an American. The focus of my message was on "Overcoming Giants and God's Boot Camp." I explained how God had trained and prepared His people in Egypt, just as any country puts its military through rigorous training. Since the World Cup is more popular than the Super Bowl in Europe, I included a few illustrations about my son's soccer injuries that removed the possibility of him playing professionally. Both Christians and Muslims were challenged and encouraged by these illustrations and the message. Because the World Cup between Brazil and Germany was at noon, the earlier Persian service was filled to capacity. The response was excellent—so much so that following the first service, all of our audio messages and books were taken, including BJ's booklet, *Faith through the Fire*,

containing the illustrations I used in my talk. Only a few newsletters and pamphlets were left for the English service.

Jordanian General

The pastor at the Iranian center in London also told me before I spoke that there was a retired Jordanian general in the audience. He was the second highest general in the Jordanian armed forces—next to the chief of staff—and often spoke to the king. Like Joseph in Egypt and Daniel in Babylon, God has His people in the right places today sharing the Gospel—even in countries such as Jordan.

My eyes scanned the audience during my sermon. When I said that God's boot camp is similar to rigorous military training, I recognized a man I thought must be the Jordanian general. Sure enough, after my message, the pastor asked this distinguished guest to close in prayer. The one I had identified in the audience came to the platform and prayed a wonderful prayer. (He was probably a lower-ranking officer when we went through our "Jordan Experience" fifteen years earlier. He may have even been at one of those military checkpoints where my family was traumatized.)

Before returning to his seat, this Jordanian general hugged me as he thanked me for a powerful message. For me, it was an incredible healing from lingering anger and the nightmarish dreams I had from a near-hijacking in Jordan back in 1987. God's love and mercy transcends all past hurts and traumas.

Summation

In endless ways and on countless days, I have been reminded of a most valuable lesson in Scripture: When I am weak, then I am strong, for through my weakness, God's strength is revealed!

Memory Verses

While walking together around the ministry center or at a local park, Karen and I often quote Scripture and pray. I say the first part of the verse, then she says the rest. When we finish the scriptures, we pray. As well as being spiritually, physically and emotionally beneficial, it is a peaceful way to relieve stress.

The following are some of our favorite verses we have committed to memory. We hope they will bless you as they have us. You may want to look up each verse to get its meaning in context.

Philippians 4:13 – "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

1 John 4:4 – "You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world."

2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV) – "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

Romans 8:28 – "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

Isaiah 54:17 – "No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper."

James 5:16 – "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."

Isaiah 40:31 (NKJV) – "But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

CREATION

Psalm 19:1 (NKJV) – "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands."

John 1:1-3 – "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."

PEACE AND JOY

Nehemiah 8:10 – "Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

Psalm 4:8 – "In peace I will both lie down and sleep, for You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety."

Psalm 16:11 – "You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever."

Psalm 37:4 – "Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart."

Psalm 84:11 – "No good thing does He withhold from those who walk with integrity."

Psalm 118:24 – "This is the day which the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

Proverbs 17:22 – "A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones."

Isaiah 26:3 (NKJV) – "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."

Philippians 4:4 – "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!"

Philippians 4:6-7 – "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be

made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

SEEKING GOD

Proverbs 9:10 – "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."

Jeremiah 29:13 – "You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart."

Matthew 6:33 – "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

James 4:8 – "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."

SALVATION

Psalm 51:10-12 – "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and sustain me with a willing spirit."

John 3:16 – "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

Romans 5:1 – "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Romans 8:1 – "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

John 17:3 – "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

Acts 4:12 – "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

Romans 10:9-10 – "That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV) – "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."

2 Corinthians 5:21 – "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Ephesians 2:8-9 – "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of

works, so that no one may boast."

1 John 5:11-13 – "And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life."

PROTECTION AND DIRECTION

Deuteronomy 31:6 – "Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble, for the LORD your God goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you."

Proverbs 3:5-6 – "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight."

Psalm 34:4, 7 – "I sought the LORD, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, and rescues them."

Psalm 121:1-2 – "I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; from where shall my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth."

Isaiah 43:2-3 – "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you. For I am the LORD your God."

Zechariah 4:6 – "'...Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts."

Matthew 10:28 – "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

James 1:5 – "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given

to him."

FAITH AND CONFIDENCE

Romans 10:17 – "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."

2 Timothy 1:12 – "I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day."

2 Timothy 4:7-8 – "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 – "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words."

Hebrews 11:1, 6 – "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."

PROVISION AND PRAISE

Joshua 1:8 – "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."

Psalm 113:3 – "From the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the LORD is to be praised."

Mark 12:30 – "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength."

John 13:34-35 – "I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another."

Philippians 4:19 – "And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

For More Information

Bill Rudge has produced numerous books, pamphlets and audio messages on a variety of timely topics. For a complete listing or a copy of his informative newsletter, visit www.billrudge.org or write to:

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